

# 2006 LEGISLATIVE REPORT TO THE VOTERS



## REP. SHIRLEY HANKINS

P.O. Box 40600  
425-A Legislative Bldg.  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Phone: (360) 786-7882  
Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

E-mail:  
hankins.shirley@leg.wa.gov

Web site:  
<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/hankins.htm>

Committees:  
Capital Budget  
Transportation  
Technology, Energy &  
Communications

TTY (Hearing-impaired Hotline):  
1-800-635-9993

Legislative Information  
on the Internet:  
[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

State Government  
on the Internet:  
[www.access.wa.gov](http://www.access.wa.gov)

## REP. SHIRLEY HANKINS 8TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Dear friends,

I greatly appreciate the honor to serve and represent you in the House of Representatives. Thank you for your cards, letters, e-mails and personal visits during our recently completed legislative session. Your views help me to better represent you in Olympia.

The 2006 legislative session adjourned March 8, one day earlier than our scheduled 60 days. It was only the second time in the history of our state that we've adjourned early. (The first time was in 1986.)

Much was accomplished during the two months we were in Olympia. The Legislature approved tougher sentences against sex offenders. After years of negotiations, we finally reached agreement on a major water initiative and provided money for the expansion of freight rail service for Eastern Washington farmers. We approved legislation to keep our local wineries viable. We stopped bad legislation that would have negatively impacted Hanford. We adopted reforms that will allow exploration of alternatives to the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning). Plus, the Legislature moved forward to allow expansion of WSU Tri-Cities into a four-year institution.



Unfortunately, the Legislature failed to pay its debts, such as the state's pension system.

This newsletter provides a report to our local voters of the major issues addressed and of missed opportunities in the 2006 legislative session.

Please contact me anytime you have questions, comments or suggestions about state government.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shirley Hankins".

Rep. Shirley Hankins

**TOLL-FREE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 1-800-562-6000**

## SUPPLEMENTAL OPERATING BUDGET IS ANYTHING BUT SUPPLEMENTAL

The purpose for a 60-day session is to adjust the two-year operating budget adopted during the previous legislative session. A supplemental budget is supposed to: address unanticipated, unmanageable changes in program caseloads; correct a serious



technical error in the original appropriation; deal with an emergency; and/or address an opportunity not be available in the next biennium.

Except for minor changes in school enrollments and department caseloads, there were no other pressing needs that required reopening the budget process this year. Yet that's what the majority party did when it discovered that the state would be taking in an extra \$1.6 billion.

The budget plan spends \$468 million on new programs, and transfers \$825 million to other spending accounts. It adds 816 employees to the state payroll. Unfortunately, no money was placed into a protected rainy day fund.

### ***Pension funding***

In reality, the state never really had a "surplus." That's because we have a \$4 billion unfunded liability in Plan 1 of the Public Employees Retirement System and the Teachers Retirement System. This year, the Legislature did resume payments to the unfunded portion of the state's pension system for the first time in four years, but voted to phase in the Fiscal Year 2007 payment over three years and not make up for payments suspended during the previous three years. The excuse was that local governments would have had to do the same, and smaller counties, cities and school districts would have been in a bind. So they would -- but the result will be much larger pension funding costs for all in future years.

### ***Hanford amendment***

I also fought an amendment on the House floor that would have implemented Initiative 297 in the budget and which would have provided a never-ending stream of public tax money for the 501(c)(3) organizations listed under that measure. I-297 is the Hanford clean-up measure approved nearly two years ago by voters. I successfully argued that since the measure is under review in federal courts, we should not attempt to intervene through the budget. Fortunately, that amendment died.

## EARLY LEARNING, WSU TRI-CITIES AND WASL RECEIVE ATTENTION

Perhaps the biggest winner of this year's legislative session was education.

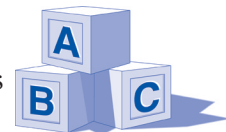
### ***WSU Tri-Cities to four years***

The Legislature approved House Bill 2867, a measure I co-sponsored which directs WSU Tri-Cities to prepare a plan for becoming a four-year institution by the start of the 2007 academic year.



### ***Early Learning Department***

We also approved a measure that creates a Department of Early Learning. This bill cements the recognition that children are born to learn, and that one of the most effective ways to ensure academic success is to start before kindergarten – the most important years of a child's emotional and intellectual development. This has been proven over and over again through Kennewick's ready-to-learn program, which is a model for the genesis of this new department.



### ***New assessment options***

Lawmakers also approved a measure that will allow six school districts, including Richland, to use assessments other than the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) to gauge math and reading performances of third, fifth, sixth and eighth-grade students.



## PAGE PROGRAM OFFERS LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Many thanks to Ean Arnold, Bailey Davidson and Shaylene Espericueta, all from Kennewick, who served as legislative pages in my Olympia office for one week.

These young people had the unique opportunity to view the legislative process firsthand. They participated in ceremonial tasks such as presenting flags and also helped in operational chores like delivering messages and documents to legislators in their offices, committee meetings and the House chamber. Pages are between the ages of 14 and 17 and spend two hours each day in a classroom setting learning about the Legislature.

For more information about how to become involved in the page program or the intern program, visit: <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/house/pageinternprogram> or call my office at (360) 786-7882.



**Ean Arnold**



**Shaylene Espericueta**



**Bailey Davidson**

# REP. SHIRLEY HANKINS • 8TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

## 2006 LEGISLATIVE REPORT TO THE VOTERS

### 2006 - THE YEAR OF THE FARMER

We took action on several important issues to help farmers, including:

- **COLUMBIA RIVER WATER INITIATIVE:** In what some lawmakers called a “landmark compromise,” the Columbia River agreement between conservationists and water users sets the stage for a 10-year, \$200 million bond package that would increase water storage in the Columbia River basin. It’s taken decades to reach the deal, with one side seeking more water for communities, agriculture and commerce, and the other wanting sufficient water for fish runs.
- **FARM TAX BREAKS:** Under HB 2424, farmers and ranchers won’t have to pay the sales tax on diesel or aviation fuel used for farm applications, saving them about \$1,500 a year.
- **WINE DIRECT SALES:** This legislation allows out-of-state wineries to sell directly to retailers rather than through a distributor. Washington wineries already are allowed to self-distribute their wines, but out-of-state wineries are forced to sell through a distributor. Costco argued in a lawsuit that such protectionism artificially inflates the cost of non-Washington wine and beer. A U.S. District Court judge agreed in a ruling late last year, forcing lawmakers to take action. Had the bill not been approved, in-state wineries would have lost all self-distribution rights – a potentially huge blow to small wineries that don’t produce enough wine to use distributors.



### TRANSPORTATION BUDGET BRINGS EXPANDED FARM RAIL ACCESS, HIGHWAY SAFETY PROJECTS

The Legislature provided \$2.5 million in the supplemental transportation budget and another \$1 million in the capital construction budget to expand rail service for Eastern Washington farmers to East Coast markets. Raillex has proposed building a \$20 million distribution center in Wallula, southeast of the Tri-Cities. The Port of Walla Walla is trying to secure \$7.5 million to buy land, provide water service and build a road and rail loop to support the proposed center. It already has \$3.2 million in grants and loans. Money provided by the Legislature will help to pay the balance. One train a week capable of carrying 8 million pounds of produce will depart for Albany, N.Y., and arrive in fewer than six days.



#### *Highway 12 safety improvements*

As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I am continuing work to secure funding for expansion of Highway 12 into four lanes from Wallula to Walla Walla. This 28-mile section has been the site of many accidents. It’s also a major route for slow-moving trucks carrying nearly tons of cargo. Work has begun on parts of U.S. 12, funded by the nickel package and the 9½ cent gas tax increase approved last year. It is essential that this project receive full funding and is completed to increase safety.

#### *Highway 395 north*

We also added \$32 million to ensure the continuation of the Highway 395 north-south freeway project in Spokane. This is also another important project locally, because Highway 395 is the major route out of the Tri-Cities to destinations north.



*Rep. Shirley Hankins discusses transportation issues with Rep. Mary Skinner, R-Yakima. Both serve on the House Transportation Committee.*



# REP. SHIRLEY HANKINS • 8TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

## VEHICLE WEIGHT FEES PROVIDE FLEXIBLE TRANSPORTATION DOLLARS

I've received a number of calls and mail from local citizens wondering why they are now paying vehicle weight fees in addition to their vehicle tab fees. Last year, when the Legislature approved a 9½ cent increase in the state's gasoline tax, the package also included new vehicle weight fees as of this year.

The 18th amendment to the state's constitution mandates that all state gasoline taxes "be used exclusively for highway purposes." Gasoline fees collected may not be used for buses, rail or other transportation projects. They must be used for our highways and bridges (ferries are also included). That means funding for mass transit, rail and other projects must come from other sources. That source used to be the state's motor vehicle excise tax until voters repealed it several years ago. So lawmakers decided last year to add vehicle weight fees, which range from \$10 to \$32, depending on the weight of your car. Commercial vehicles and motor homes pay more.

This revenue is what we call "flexible money" because it may be used to provide for other transportation needs besides highways. It's one of the reasons we were able to provide money in the transportation budget this year for expansion of rail lines in Eastern Washington that will get our farm goods to market much sooner. It will also help us to relieve train congestion in downtown Kennewick through the expansion of those other rail lines.

## CAPITAL BUDGET PROJECTS BRING MONEY HOME

Our citizens send a lot of their tax money to Olympia. As a member of the Capital Budget Committee, I've worked to ensure that we will bring your money back home to provide services and facilities for our local citizens. Here's a list of money I secured in the capital construction budget in the past two years for projects in the 8th District:

- Academy of Children's Theatre - Richland .....\$150,000
- Red Mountain land-use study .....\$200,000
- Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center - Prosser.....\$2.25 million
- Hanford Reach Interpretive Center .....\$2 million
- CBC/Richland Health Sciences Center .....\$3 million
- CBC/WSU Transition .....\$250,000
- Pacific Northwest National Laboratory -  
Campus infrastructure .....\$6 million
- Columbia Basin water storage .....\$10 million
- Tri-Cities bioproducts facility.....\$11.65 million

## GROUND BROKEN FOR WALTER CLORE WINE AND CULINARY CENTER



The shovels broke ground March 28 on the Clore Center in Prosser, which will be a museum and monument to the state's wine industry. Named for Walter Clore, the father of Washington wine who developed the industry in southeast Washington, the center will be a stopping point for tourists as they travel to local wineries and an educational resource.

Our local wine industry generates \$3 billion with more than 29 thousand vineyard acres. We have 22 new wineries recently opening in the Prosser area. The Clore Center will help to showcase our world-famous Washington wines and will generate jobs and new income for our local area.

Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
P.O. Box 40600

REP. SHIRLEY HANKINS

2006 LEGISLATIVE REPORT TO THE VOTERS

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Washington State  
Department of Printing